



CHAPTER TWENTY NEWS

society of broadcast engineers
pittsburgh chapter

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Vice chair Dave Kasperek, WTAE; Chairman Paul Byers, WQED; Secretary Sean Ryan, Independence Communication, Inc.; Treasurer Stephen Zelenko, aspStation, Inc.



Last Meeting

Henry Lassige, Jr.
KDKA-TV
hlassigejr@verizon.net

Our January meeting was held at Alexander's Restaurant in Bloomfield. We had twelve people attend. Paul Byers, our chapter chairperson was the presiding officer. The main business of the meeting was the election of officers. We elected a new secretary and a new treasurer. Our new treasurer is Stephen Zelenko. Our new secretary is Sean Ryan. Paul Byers was retained as chapter chairman and Dave Kasperek was retained as vice chair.

The program of the meeting was about the operator training for the BAS 2GHz relocation. It was presented by Dave Dumas and Ken Bright of Azcar Training Systems. The training sessions are being done using Windows Live Messenger. Sessions can also be seen via satellite Galaxy 19. They are using the studios from WPGH-TV.

From the point of view of the live truck operator, there is not much difference in tuning in the live shot. One difference is that in many instances it may be better to have the truck transmitter set on low power rather than high power. The major difference will be for the ENG operator trying to tune in the live shots. They will have to rely on a spectrum monitor rather than a picture or waveform monitor to determine the quality of the signal.

Training is available Monday through Saturday between nine am and seven-thirty pm. If anyone has already done their training, Ken and Dave said they would appreciate some feedback. Their e-mail address is info@azcartaining.com.



Chairman's Corner

(Surprise!)

Digital Transition

Paul Byers
Executive Director of Engineering, WQED
pbyers@wqed.org

THE hot topic this month has to be the DTV transition (again). It's been a roller coaster ride the past few weeks with Bills introduced in both the House and Senate to delay the transition date. One Bill never made it to the floor for a vote and another was vetoed only to be resurrected and passed the second time around. As I write this, the Bill sits on President Obama's desk awaiting his signature. Once signed into law the new deadline for analog shut down will be June 12th.

But, in typical political fashion the FCC has waffled and allowed broadcasters to shut off their analog transmitters on February 17th if they so choose. So far more than 25% of America's full power broadcast television stations have elected to do just that, with many more still undecided. This is sure to result in even more confusion (if that's possible) as some stations in each market leave their analog transmitters on while others turn them off.

In our market KDKA, WPXI and WTAE have chosen to remain on the air with analog signals until June 12th while WPGH, WPMY and WQEX are shutting down analog on February 17th. WQED will shut off its analog transmitter on April 1st. WPCB will shut off its analog transmitter on March 17 while WPCW is unable to move to digital broadcasting until WPXI vacates their analog channel 11 on June 12.

The only good news here is that Nielsen rates this market as the 4th most prepared for the transition in the country with only about 3% of the population not ready for the switch. In short, it's a mess but it's not brain surgery so no one is going to die if they don't have a TV signal for a week or two, so we'll get through it. One day we may even laugh about it!

Please note that there will be a change in time and location of the meeting this month. It will still

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Chairman's Corner

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be held on Thursday, January 19th, but the time is noon and the location is the WPXI studios located at 4145 Evergreen Road, Pittsburgh 15214. The topic of the meeting will be the digital transition (surprise!). Lunch will be provided, so I hope you can all attend.

FCC Report

Paul Byers
pbyers@wqed.org

FCC ANNOUNCES EARLY ANALOG TERMINATION PROCEDURES UNDER NEW LAW

Action Required By Monday, February 9 to Terminate On February 17

As we await word that President Obama has signed the DTV transition deadline extension Act into law, the FCC has issued a public notice with procedures for termination of analog service on or after February 17, rather than broadcasting until the extended deadline of June 12.

TERMINATION ON FEBRUARY 17

Notification. The FCC is partially waiving its established requirements for stations planning to terminate analog service on February 17. This action paves the way for such licensees to notify the Commission of the intention to terminate analog operations. Notification is accomplished by e-filing a brief CDBS form that requires only a statement of the intent to terminate analog broadcasting on February 17. No justification or exhibit is required. Those filing must also update the DTV Transition Status Report to reflect the termination notice.

TIMING

Termination notices for February 17 must be filed by the end of Monday, February 9. The many licensees that have previously filed notifications of intent to terminate analog operations on February 17 have to file the new form. There is no guidance on the deadline for the DTV Transition Status Report, but we recommend filing it by Monday night as well.

No turning back. If you notify the Commission that you are terminating analog operations on February 17, you may not withdraw or modify the notification except in the event of emergency or disaster necessitating the continued operation of analog service. If

you use this procedure, your analog operations will not be protected from interference after February 17.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

If you are terminating early, you are required to broadcast 120 viewer announcements, including 30 in prime time, distributed evenly through the announcement period. The Commission's example is that if you provide eight days of announcements, you would need to broadcast them at least 15 times a day with at least 3.75 in prime time, meaning four times a day for six of the eight days and three times a day for the other two days. The information to be included in the announcements is at footnote 13 of the Commission's public notice.

If you already notified the Commission of your intention to terminate analog broadcasting on February 17, the announcements you have run to date count towards the requirement, even though you need to file a new notice. In addition to the regular early termination announcements, if technically feasible you must broadcast a crawl on your analog channel for the seven-day period from February 10 at 11:59 p.m. EST through termination at 11:59 p.m. EST. (This is the unusual circumstance where a requirement is tied to EST rather than your local time). For the first five days the crawl must be aired for five minutes of every hour. *Note that the information at the top of page 5 of the FCC's public notice has a mistake with respect to these crawls; the first five days are the 11th through the 15th, rather than the 10th through the 14th.* For the final two days the crawl must be aired ten minutes an hour. The crawl requirements are set forth at footnote 15 of the Commission's public notice. If you cannot air crawls because of technical limitations you must instead air the information in an alternative format, such as broadcasting, you guessed it, additional PSAs! However, the Commission has not stated how to compute equivalency and the staff is currently considering the possibility of an accommodation on this requirement for PBS member stations, which may not be reasonably able to air crawls during programs and were exempted from earlier consumer education crawl requirements.



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Society of Broadcast Engineers
Chapter 20
P.O. Box 16312
Pittsburgh, PA 15242-0312

Web page <http://www.sbe20.org>

Chairman-	Paul Byers	412-622-1530
Vice Chair-	Dave Kasperek	412-244-4615
Secretary-	Sean Ryan	412-726-9849
Treasurer-	Stephen Zelenko	412-519-3323
Frequency Coordinator-	Otto Schellin	412-237-1184
Expo Planner-	Joann Garvin	724-843-7501
Certification-	Tom Skubel	412-244-4435
FCC Committee-	Paul Byers	412-622-1530
Newsletter Editor-	Gary Stewart	412-824-3930
Newsletter DTP-	Jean Stewart	412-678-9211

Hard to believe that it's that simple to terminate analog broadcasts on February 17?

You're right. The Commission "reserves the right to limit or reconsider this partial waiver in the event that it determines that analog termination on February 17 by a station or group of stations is contrary to the public interest." It is concerned with the possibility that all or most of the stations in a market where many viewers are not prepared could terminate on the 17th. The FCC cautions licensees to consider your particular market circumstances and viewers' digital readiness, including coupon request and redemption rates. The Commission is keen on having at least one nightlight station per market and urges each licensee terminating on February 17 to consider staying on analog for two additional weeks with information slates or nightlight-type service.

Where multiple shutoffs are proposed for a market, the Commission may notify filers that they must submit a public interest showing that provides "significant economic, technical, contractual, and other business reasons that support termination on February 17." The Commission states that it will closely review such showings. There appears to be no opportunity to advance such a showing when filing the request in order to head off an inquiry and there is no assurance as to when the Commission would ask for the additional information. This proviso raises the possibility that those notifying the Commission of the intent to terminate analog operations on February 17 for a group of stations in different communities may be permitted to do so with respect to some but not all. The FCC encourages licensees to collaborate on their public information campaigns with other licensees in their state or market that contemplate a February 17th analog shutoff.

MVPD COORDINATION

The FCC says that you are to communicate "directly and immediately" with area cable systems, satellite operators, and other multichannel video providers about early termination plans and suggests that you coordinate with them on your planned analog termination date in any event.

TERMINATION BETWEEN FEBRUARY 17 AND JUNE 12

No analog terminations will be permitted from February 18 to March 13. Those wishing to terminate after March 13 but before June 12 must notify the Commission at least 30 days prior to the planned termination date and provide viewer notifications for at least 30 days prior to the termination date. So, for example, if you wish to terminate analog broadcasting on March 15, you

would need to notify the Commission no later than February 13, file a DTV Transition Status Report update, and run announcements at least between February 13 and March 15. There are no special crawl requirements for licensees terminating analog early but prior to the new extended deadline and there is a lesser urgency about continuing analog slate or nightlight type broadcasts following the termination of analog programs.

DIGITAL FACILITIES AFTER EARLY TERMINATION

The FCC reminds licensees that if you terminate analog broadcasts prior to June 12 you may operate solely a pre-transition DTV station and not a post-transition station with different facilities. In order to operate with facilities approved to date only for post transition operation you must apply for and receive a digital STA, if you have not already done so. The requirement is that you not cause impermissible interference to another station, you must maintain at least your current DTV service area, and you must commence full post transition operations on the transition deadline. If you are in this situation consult your engineers as soon as possible. Whether or not you can file may depend in part on actions by other area stations.

TERMINATION ON JUNE 12

If you plan to continue analog broadcasts until the new June 12 transition deadline, you need take no action at the FCC.



Musings of a Consultant 3D?

John Luff
Television Technology Consultant
john.luff@HDConsulting.tv

"Lately there has been considerable talk about 3D in both theatres and broadcast television. I have to confess at first I was not supportive, or better said, I frankly didn't get it. As an officer of SMPTE, I was wrong. There is great interest on the part of content providers, as well as distribution media companies, including to my great surprise both cable and broadcast television. Now whether this is my age showing (I admit that is VERY likely...I remember 3D movies in the 60's), or just a technical judgment, does not matter.

The fact is that sports providers, including the NFL and NBA, have produced high profile experiments this year, and CEA companies see 3D (really stereoscopic display) capabilities as key to future distribution to consumers. Motion picture companies see higher profits with 3D releases.

I don't pretend to understand it, but the next step needs to be standards to make it a seamless and successful holistic system from content provider to the home. SMPTE is trying to get providers to coalesce around production standards, and CEA is investigating how to wrestle the display industry to a common platform.

But even theatres are still split on how to do this, though 3Ality, Dolby, and Real D have a large lead on any potential competitors in the theatrical display marketplace.

I just hope we don't see Jon Stewart in 3D during the next election..."

Society of Broadcast Engineers
Pittsburgh Chapter
P.O. Box 16312
Pittsburgh, PA 15242

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Status of Analog Shutdown Dates for Pittsburgh Stations

WPGH (FOX)	February 17, 2009	A - 53	D - 43
WPMY	February 17, 2009	A - 22	D - 42
WQEX (PBS)	February 17, 2009	A - 16	D - 26
WPCB (CTVN)	March 17, 2009	A - 40	D - 50
WQED (PBS)	April 1, 2009	A - 13	D - 38
KDKA (CBS)	June 12, 2009	A - 2	D - 25
(KDKA is a "Night Light station": will broadcast digital transition information only for 30 additional days)			
WPCW	June 12, 2009	A - 19	D - 11
WPXI (NBC)	June 12, 2009	A - 11	D - 48
WTAE (ABC)	June 12, 2009	A - 4	D - 51

"... the FCC's public notice has a mistake ..."
See Paul Byer's article on page 2 for details



Next Meeting

Date: Thursday, February 19 @ NOON

Location: WPXI Studios, 4145 Evergreen Road, Pittsburgh 15214

Time: 12:00 NOON Lunch meeting

Program: Digital Transition
including phone bank



Next Meeting ...

Digital Transition

Dave Kasperek
Director of
Engineering, WTAE
dkasperek@hearst.com

Our next meeting is at WPXI at Noon on Thursday February 19, the regular meeting date. Our subject is coordinating phone bank experts to help answer calls on the (presumed) delayed transition date and other transition issues.



Reflections make the line grow longer.